

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 EA-06 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7867

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

CINCPAC

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

USLO PEKING

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR,UR,CM

SUBJECT:SOVIETS SUPPORT KHMER INSURGENTS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

1. SUMMARY. MOSCOW HAS MORE THAN MADE UP FOR ITS LACK OF SUBSTANTIVE COMMENT ON RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN CAMBODIA IN THREE SIGNED COMMENTARIES ON MARCH 4-5. THE ITEMS HIGHLIGHT THE RECENT MILITARY SUCCESSES OF THE "PATRIOTIC" FORCES, THE ALLEGED MILITARY AND ECONOMIC WEAKNESS OF THE PHNOM PENH REGIME, THE RESOLUTIONS OF THE RECENT SECOND NATIONAL CONGRESS OF PATRIOTIC FORCES, AND MOSCOW'S SUPPORT FOR THE JUST CAUSE OF THE "LIBERATORS." CRITICISM OF THE U.S. IS LIMITED AND NEITHER SIHANOUK LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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NOR ANY OTHER LEADER OF THE INSURGENT SIDE IS NAMED.

MOSCOW'S DECISION TO WEIGH IN NOW PROBABLY REFLECTS AND ASSESSMENT THAT THE INSURGENTS ARE CLOSE TO VICTORY AND THAT THE U.S. CONGRESS WILL NOT PROVIDE SUFFICIENT NEW AID TO PREVENT IT. END SUMMARY.

2. APART FROM FREQUENT SHORT DISPATCHES FROM BANGKOK AND HANOI, SOVIET MEDIA HAVE BEEN VERY QUIET ABOUT THE RECENT UPSURGE IN FIGHTING IN CAMBODIA. MOSCOW MAY WELL HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR A MORE DECISIVE TURN IN THE FIGHTING AND A BETTER INDICATION OF THE MOOD OF THE AMERICAN CONGRESS ON SUPPLEMENTARY AID. IN ANY CASE, MOSCOW FACES SOMETHING OF A POLICY DILEMMA TOWARD CAMBODIA. ON THE ONE HAND, FOR IDEOLOGICAL REASONS IT FEELS DUTY BOUND TO SUPPORT THE INSURGENTS. ON THE OTHER HAND, IT IS OBVIOUSLY SOMEWHAT LESS THAN ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT A GROUP WHICH HAS CLOSE TIES TO PEKING.

3. WHATEVER THE REASONS, THE SOVIET SHIFTED FROM QUIET TO VOCAL IN THREE SIGNED COMMENTARIES IN THE CENTRAL DAILIES ON MARCH 4-5. IZVESTIYA (MARCH 4) CARRIED AS ITS MAIN COMMENTARY AN ITEM FROM M. IL'INSKIY IN HANOI CALLED "DECISIVE STEP IN THE STRUGGLE." THE ARTICLE DESCRIBES THE SUCCESSES OF THE "PEOPLE'S ARMED FORCES" SINCE JANUARY 1, AND CLAIMS THAT PHNOM PENH LOST "ABOUT TEN THOUSAND SOLDIERS AND OFFICERS" IN THE FIRST MONTH OF THIS YEAR. WHEN THE MEKONG CONVOYS WERE STOPPED, SAYS IZVESTIYA, THE LON NOL ARMY BECAME DEPENDENT ON PENTAGON-RUN AIR LIFTS WHICH VIOLATE THE PARIS AGREEMENT. BUT THE PATRIOTS WILL PREVAIL, SAYS IZVESTIYA, AND THE APPEAL BY THE SECOND NATIONAL CONGRESS HAS BROUGHT MANY DEFECTORS. "THE SOVIET PEOPLE," SAYS IZVESTIYA IN CLOSING, ALWAYS STAND ON THE SIDE OF THE "JUST STRUGGLE OF THE KHMER PEOPLE."

4. PRAVDA (MARCH 5) CARRIES A SIMILAR ITEM FROM THE PAPER'S HANOI CORRESPONDENT, V. SKVORTSOV. THE ARTICLE POINTS TO THE MEKONG BLOCKADE, THE FALL OF OUDONG AND NEAK LUONG AND CLAIMS THAT THE PATRIOTIC FORCES ARE SUCCESSFUL BECAUSE THEY ARE FIGHTING FOR "THE PEOPLE" AND SEEK INDEPENDENCE AND THE END OF FOREIGN INTERFERENCE IN THEIR COUNTRY. PHNOM PENH'S REMAINING STRENGTH, SAYS PRAVDA, IS DUE SOLELY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO PENTAGON AID; THE REGIME SERVES THE INTEREST OF THOSE IN THE U.S. WHO OPPOSE THE NORMALIZATION OF THE SITUATION IN INDOCHINA. PRAVDA NOTES THE NATIONAL CONGRESS' DECISION TO ISSUE ITS OWN CURRENCY TO AVOID POSSIBLE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS IN THE FUTURE, AND CITES ITS DECLARATION THAT THE PATRIOTS FOLLOW A POLICY OF NEUTRALISM AND NON-ALIGNMENT, SUPPORTING THE PRINCIPLES OF PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE.

5. THE SOVIET ARMY NEWSPAPER, KRASNAYA ZVEZDA (MARCH 5) CARRIES A COMMENTARY BY A. LEONTYEV WHICH HIGHLIGHTS THE MILITARY ASPECTS OF THE CAMBODIAN FIGHTING. IN PARTICULAR IT FOCUSES ON THE VITAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MEKONG FOR SUPPLIES TO PHNOM PENH AND THE SUCCESS OF THE "PATRIOTIC FORCES" IN STOPPING CONVOYS SINCE FEBRUARY 5. THE ARTICLE CITES U.S. PRESS ARTICLES TO THE EFFECT THAT SECRETARIES SCHLESINGER AND KISSINGER HAVE CONCLUDED THAT PHNOM PENH PROBABLY COULD NOT BE SAVED EVEN WITH MORE AID, AND ENDS WITH THE USUAL AFFIRMATION OF SUPPORT FOR THE "PATRIOTS."

6. COMMENT. MOSCOW'S DECISION TO ENDORSE THE RECENT INTENSIFICATION OF THE FIGHTING BY THE KHMER INSURGENTS, FOLLOWING ITS EARLIER LOW-KEY COVERAGE, PROBABLY SIGNALS ITS VIEW THAT THE SITUATION HAS CHANGED DECISIVELY IN FAVOR OF THE INSURGENTS. THE SOVIET MAY ALSO BELIEVE THAT THE CHANCES FOR EFFECTIVE U.S. ACTION TO PREVENT AN INSURGENT VICTORY ARE GROWING MORE AND MORE UNLIKELY. THEIR TREATMENT OF THE U.S. IS HIGHLY CAUTIOUS AND PROBABLY REFLECTS A SOVIET DESIRE TO KEEP CAMBODIA FROM BECOMING AN ISSUE OF DISPUTE BETWEEN MOSCOW AND WASHINGTON.

7 THE ARTICLES ARE ALSO NOTABLE FOR OMITTING ANY MENTION OF SIKANOUK OR OTHER LEADER OF THE "PATRIOTIC" FORCES. THE SOVIETS HAVE PRIVATELY BEMOANED THE FACT THAT THEY HAVE FEW ASSETS IN CAMBODIA AND PROBABLY SEE THEMSELVES AS HAVING LITTLE OPTION EXCEPT TO FOLLOW HANOI'S LEAD IN INDO-CHINA. IN VIEW OF SIHANOUK'S WELL-KNOWN ANTI-SOVIET BIAS AND HIS TIES TO THE CHINESE, MOSCOW WOULD CLEARLY NOT GRIEVE IF HE WERE ULTIMATELY LEFT OUT OF THE PICTURE. STOESSEL

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